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# SERMON

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RODEF SHALOM,

JULIANNA STREET,

ON

HANKSGIVING DAY,

November 26th, 1868,

BY

**Rev. Dr. M. JASTROW,**

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## PREFACE.

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An abstract of the following sermon appeared in the Philadelphia "Press," of the 27th of November. Several passages which I deemed particularly necessary to impress on public attention have, however, been omitted for reasons unknown to me, but which, on a perusal of the whole, the reader may easily conjecture.

Having only two years ago arrived in this country with scarcely any knowledge of the English language, I feel obliged to crave indulgence for any defects of style, yet I consider it due to the cause of Judaism as well as of Religious Liberty in general, to yield to the wishes of my Congregation by permitting this discourse to be printed unabridged.

M. J.



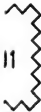


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## SERMON.

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BRETHREN! As on previous occasions similar to the present one, when a national idea called us into the house of God, let us to-day also look into the book of Psalms in order to discover a word expressive of the feelings with which we are to enter and leave this sanctuary, on a day whose principal aim is to arouse us to the consciousness that we are not only individuals obliged to use the abilities and blessings bestowed upon us by the Giver of all good for our own benefit; not only fathers and mothers or members of a family, bound to devote to its happiness all our inherent powers; not only members of a community united with us by the ties of a common faith, which it is our duty to maintain and foster; not only links of that great chain, called human society, to which we are responsible for our doings, every good action of ours tending to elevate and enlarge its happiness, every bad action disturbing and obscuring the shining brightness of its progress; but that we are, besides all this, *citizens of a free State*, whose peace is our peace, whose welfare is our welfare, the feelings and sympathies for which, are to bind together all the inhabitants of this great country in common ties of affection, an affection that is to be exalted above all the differences of religious and political tenets, so often separating brother from brother, and setting citizen in opposition to citizen.



The Psalm I have chosen for this occasion is the hundredth, and reads as follows:

A psalm of thanksgiving. Shout joyfully unto the Lord all the land. Serve the Lord with joy; come before His presence with triumphal song. Know, that the Eternal One is God; It is He that hath made us, and His we are—His people, and the flock of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving, His courts with praise; give thanks unto Him, bless His name. For the Lord is good; His kindness endureth to eternity, and His truth unto the latest generation.

This Psalm instructs us *how we ought to celebrate a day of thanksgiving* proclaimed for a whole country, in which pure religion and true patriotism are identical and inseparable, or at least should be identical and inseparable; both being founded on the deep, free conviction of the human heart,

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The first appeal to thanksgiving is: "Shout joyfully unto the Lord, all ye inhabitants of the country"—*here none are excluded, none forgotten, none ignored.*

How indeed could it be otherwise? Would it not be a singular contradiction to exclude one portion or one sect of the community from the participation of a holiday, the characteristic of which is the union of *all* citizens to renew one idea, namely, the gathering of all children around the same beloved mother, the country, for the purpose of bringing sacrifices of thanks to their universal *Father* for the blessings they have enjoyed in common, in the lap of their general *Mother* during an eventful year.

Only he who has no father to whom he may bring a heart full of thanks, before whom he may pour out feelings of gratitude; only he who acknowledges no Heavenly Ruler of the Universe, may be excluded. He may be and is by his own act excluded; not from the rights of citizenship; far be it from us to express an intimation so dangerous to the liberty of all, making frail men controllers of the holiest treasure of the heart. Not from citizenship is he to be excluded who says: "There is no God;" but he excludes himself when the children of the country are called upon to offer thanks for the enjoyment of peace and freedom and progress; he having no altar on which to lay offerings of thanks, being his own altar, his own God.

But as soon as a denizen of the land acknowledges a Supreme Being before whom he prostrates himself and bends the knee, the appeal to citizens for thanksgiving should not exclude him on account of differences in religious ideas, over which no man on earth is entitled to sit in judgment.

"Shout unto the Lord *all* the land!" Whoever recognizes a Lord in his heart, whoever has a house of worship, an altar on which to offer sacrifices of holy feelings and sacred affections, let him serve and worship the Lord with joy, let him come before His majestic presence with triumphal song, on a day of national thanksgiving.

Thus the psalmist invites not only his co-religionists to the general thanksgiving, but he call upon all the earth to shout before the Lord, all nationalities to come before Him with joy.

Thus the *nature* of a national festival demands *union* and *not separation* of the children of the nation; demands that he who

invokes the people for such a purpose should have learned from the psalmist how to call upon *all* the land, how to say: "Shout unto the Lord *all* ye inhabitants of the country; serve ye the Lord with joy, every one according to his way of worship; come ye before His presence with triumphal song, every sect according to its tenets."

Thus the principle of freedom and equality to all, the principle on which American Institutions are based, calls upon every American to obliterate all differences, both political as well as religious, at the moment of celebrating a *national* idea—of addressing the people on a subject of general interest and sympathy.

This truth is clear, self-evident—and yet the chief Magistrate of our State, has torn down the banner of American freedom and equality, at the very moment of proclaiming a general gathering before the Maker of heaven and earth beneath this very banner! The Ruler of this state, elected by the voice of the people to be the protector of the rights—not of a majority, not of a party, not of a sect, but of *all* citizens, *all* portions of the people,—the Governor of this State has ignored the character of his office, and the character of the Constitution of the United States, by making his own particular belief the basis of a proclamation to the commonwealth, thus intimating that he wishes only such to unite with him in thanksgiving for the country's happiness and greatness, who may profess certain Dogmas similar to his own, and that he considers all other inhabitants under his jurisdiction unworthy to shout before their God, to serve Him with joy, to come before His presence with triumphal song, when the *country* celebrates a day of *national* importance.

It is often said, and even by Israelites, that this country, on account of the faith professed by the *majority* of its inhabitants, is a *Christian* country, and, therefore, we, sons of Israel, should in silence enjoy all the gifts that the freedom of this country bestows upon us, and not take it as an offence, if in public manifestations, our peculiar tenets are not treated with the same consideration and respect as those of other denominations.

To those entertaining such an opinion I would address the subsequent words of our psalm: "Know ye, and remember that the Eternal One is the God of us all, it is He who made us and His we are, His people and the flock of His pasture."

Before God, the Creator of us all, there is no difference between man and man, and so it ought to be among mankind.

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You have no right to establish a discrimination between the children of the same Father—you have no right to assign the country to one faith or one sect, for it is God that made us; it is He that made this nation and enabled it to erect its Government of freedom.

It is an expressive hint that our wise men who endeavored to ascertain the true and genuine reading of the text of our Holy Scriptures, did not neglect to transmit to us a different version of one especial word in our psalm, according to which we are to read: "It is He that hath made us, and *not* we ourselves, His people and the flock of His pasture."

A sentence, indeed, full of deep meaning hath been preserved to us in that slight variation of the text.

Remember, says the poet to his nation, remember that God has made us a people and not we ourselves, that He vouchsafed us the deliverance from Egyptian slavery to become a free nation; it is to Him, and not to ourselves, we owe the state of happiness we enjoy as a free nation.

The same words might be applied to the American people: Remember that He hath formed you, He blessed your arms when borne against an odious tyrannical yoke, He blessed your arms when borne for the preservation of this happy Union!

Be mindful, Americans, that many a nation has made the same attempt, has poured out, like ye, its blood for the dear treasure of freedom and independence; fought like ye, with bravery and fortitude against tyranny, and nevertheless failed in gathering the fruits of its exertions; remember that many a nation sowed with tears, but did not, like yee, reap with joy the harvest of freedom.

Therefore, remember thy origin, O! American people, remember that it was the banner of freedom and equality to all, inscribed with the idea that the Creator has made all men equal and endowed them with inalienable rights, remember that it was the banner of freedom and equality to all under which God gave thee victory and success! Be cautious and never change this universal banner into an exclusive one! Remember that we are all His people and the flock of His pasture; and all who dwell on the fields of this country have the same rights to its rich pasture, consisting not alone in the material food it gives to its inhabitants, but far more in the sweet satisfaction and happiness of mind, which this great country



with its free institutions offers to the poorest as well as to the richest of its children, to the exclusion of none.

And ye children of Israel, ye members of that peculiar nation which from its beginning proclaimed the unity and equality of all men, as originating from one and the same earthly Father, as created and guided by one and the same heavenly Father; ye, sons of Israel, who more than two thousand three hundred years ago, heard from the mouth of the last of the prophets that grand sentence: "Have we not all one Father; hath not one God created us? Why should we deal treacherously, one against his brother, to profane the covenant of our fathers?"—ye, sons of Israel, who suffered and struggled for centuries for that great idea of universal equality, ye sons of Israel be watchful on your posts, and raise your loudest voice, whenever the slightest attack is attempted on your freedom and equal rights; give honor to the Lord your God, before it is too late, and "before your feet stumble on mountains of darkness."

It is not for yourselves alone, it is for humanity, ye children of Israel are sent forth to fight and to struggle in the name of God, the Only One, the Creator of all.

With these ideas let us enter His gates with thanksgiving, His courts with praise; give thanks unto Him, praise His name.

Give thanks unto Him that He has blessed the crops of the field in abundance to sustain man and beast; give thanks unto Him, that He has vouchsafed to sustain the preservation of order and peace in our country during the past year, and that He permits order and peace, security of life and property gradually to be restored where they have been disturbed.

Give thanks unto Him that the great contest which during the period just elapsed, has so strongly excited our people, has been decided on that peaceful battle field where the voice of man is the only weapon raised between brother and brother, between citizen and citizen, between party and party; give thanks unto Him, that no attempt was made to appeal from this peaceful decision to blood shed and public disturbance. Give thanks unto the Lord that those defeated at the polls have again embraced their country with love, finding in its free institutions and in true patriotism the guarantees for happy progress and successful development of all enterprises, engaging public and private attention. Give thanks unto the

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Lord, that the holy affections and devotion to our universal Mother, the country, have been able to still the passions of the victorious, to smooth the resentment of the defeated. Give thanks unto Him, bless His name, for the Lord is good, His kindness endureth to eternity, His truth unto the latest generation.

AMEN.

And now, brethren, arise and let us direct our hearts in solemn prayer to our heavenly Father.

O God our Lord! Thou who hast made the heaven and the earth; Thou who hast caused welfare and prosperity to spread and to increase among us; Thou who hast showered down thy abundant blessings in our beloved soil; we pray Thee, do not in future withdraw from us Thy benign countenance. Grant that peace and order may forever prevail among us; vouchsafe that the wounds which have been inflicted upon our country when brother arose against brother in unnatural enmity, may soon be healed; let them be closed forever by kind feelings of reconciliation and brotherly love.

Pour out thy spirit, the spirit of wisdom and truth, over a who by word and deed are to rule this country and to control its affairs; banish the spirit of passionate revenge and base selfishness, that it may no longer corrupt and mar true patriotism, and hinder its plans from being justly accomplished.

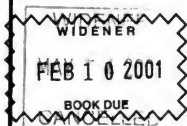
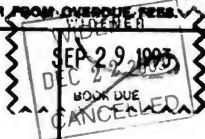
Let the lofty virtues of the framers of our Constitution be restored to our midst that they may shine in their original brightness and illumine the path of our nation; let brotherly love and concord, freedom and prosperity for all be the motive in all our public undertakings; bless the work of our hands and permit Thy favor and grace to crown all our enterprises. Strengthen the power of our beloved Union, and spread a wholesome influence abroad over all mankind, that liberty and equality may be universally established.

Let the words of our lips which we, in unison with all fellow citizens, however differing in their political and religious opinions, are offering to Thee on this day of thanksgiving in prayer—let the words of our lips and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable unto Thee, O! Lord, our Rock and Redeemer.

AMEN.



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